HI HISTÓRIA DA IHI HISTORIOGRAFIA

Emotions in Historiography: The Case of the Early Twentieth-Century Finnish Community of Historians

Emoções na historiografia: o caso da comunidade finlandesa de historiadores do início do século XX

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ABSTRACT

This article focuses on the emotional dimensions of academic historical work within the early twentiethcentury Finnish community of historians. Its starting point is the inextricable intertwining of reason and emotion a premise that is today accepted across disciplines. As the cognitive and the affective are interdependent in the production of knowledge, the formation of judgements and the making of meaning, emotions lie at the core of historians' scholarly practices and the construction of the scholarly self. By discovering four main types of feelingthinking processes that are common in historical work, the article argues that emotions not only make history personal, but also make it meaningful in the first place. On the theoretical level, the analysis leans on the insights of Maurice Merleau-Ponty, makes use of readings of Mark Johnson's and James M. Jasper's work and exploits the concept of the relational self of the historians Mary Fulbrook and Ulinka Rublack.

RESUMO

Este artigo se enfoca nas dimensões emocionais do trabalho histórico acadêmico dentro da comunidade de historiadores finlandeses do início do século XX. Seu ponto de partida é o entrelaçamento inextricável entre razão e emoção - uma premissa hoje aceita em várias disciplinas. Como o cognitivo e o afetivo são interdependentes na produção do conhecimento, na formação de julgamentos e na criação de significado, as emoções estão no cerne das práticas acadêmicas dos historiadores e na construção do eu acadêmico. Ao apontar para quatro tipos principais de processos de pensar e sentir, feeling-thinking processes, que são comuns no trabalho histórico, o artigo argumenta que as emoções não apenas tornam a história algo pessoal, mas também a tornam significativa em primeiro lugar. No nível teórico, a análise se apoia nas ideias de Maurice Merleau-Ponty; faz uso das leituras dos trabalhos de Mark Johnson e James M. Jasper; e explora o conceito de "eu relacional" dos historiadores Mary Fulbrook e Ulinka Rublack.

KEYWORDS

Historiography; Historians; Nationalism

PALAVRAS-CHAVE Historiografia; Historiadores; Nacionalismo

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Introduction

Science studies has acknowledged for a relatively long time that science is an activity in which the whole person of the scientist participates. Far from being walking dictionaries who simply understand paradigms, theories and concepts cognitively, scientists are embodied creatures of the flesh who 'feel their way' through the world. Thus, even the most abstract conceptual meanings arise from scientists' visceral, purposive engagement with the world, a fact which places emotions at the heart of their capacity to conceptualise, reason and imagine (e.g. DASTON 1995; BARBALET 2002). While not claiming that science is ultimately a form of emotionally grounded belief, this does posit that even a high degree of emotional control nevertheless allows of a certain practice-specific emotional style learned as a part of scientific training (see also BODDICE 2018, p. 85–87). As the historian of science Paul WHITE (2009a, p. 796; 2009b, p. 826) suggests, we can conceive objectivity to be a form of engagement in which a series of practices serves to discipline, display and transmute emotions in different ways in order to construct the modern scientific self.

On the other hand, historians of historiography (including both historical inquiry and history writing) still tend to avoid entering the uncertain ground of emotions in the study of their 'craft'. Even research that explicitly focuses on historians' scholarly personae, standards and epistemic values bypasses the role of emotions (e.g. PAUL 2011; 2014), thereby revealing a rather intellectualised approach to historiography. This should not be a surprise: after all, ever since the establishment of history as a modern academic discipline, there has been a remarkably enduring demand among professional historians to purge themselves of any external loyalties and swear their primary allegiance to 'the objective historical truth', which the historian Peter NOVICK (1998, p. 2) defines as 'the founding myth' of the historians' disciplinary community. This horror of `irrationalism' has relied on a stark opposition between reason and emotion.



Previous research (e.g. NOVICK 1998, p. 40–46; SMITH 1998, Ch. 4–5; BENTLEY 2013, p. 11–12, 19–20; PLAMPER 2015, p. 290–292) has explained this deep-rooted dualism by the fact that the professionalisation and academisation of historical scholarship took place in the nineteenth century in a deliberate reaction against romantic history writing carried out by gentleman scholars, female amateurs and historical novelists. In order to overcome unprofessional, supposedly feminine, sentiment and to become a proper 'science', the pioneers of the modern discipline of history centred around the source-critical study (*Quellenkritik*) of primary sources, which worked to depersonalise and even 'extinguish,' the self of the professional (male) historian.

Despite its various formulations, functions and purposes different professional contexts, in detached empiricism objectivism dominant and have arguably remained epistemological undercurrents in academic historiography (NOVICK 1998, p. 2-3; RAPHAEL 2013, p. 31). Consequently, notwithstandingbourgeoningresearchonthehistory of emotions, the emotional landscape of modern historical scholarship remains a largely unexplored area. The few publications on the subject have focused on nineteenth-century historiography (e.g. SMITH 1998; SAXER 2008; BAAR 2010; MÜLLER 2010) or the self-reflection of the historian's own emotions in archival work (e.g. FARGE 1989; DEVER, NEWMAN & VICKERY 2009; ROBINSON 2010), often in relation to exceptionally disturbing phenomena like the Holocaust (e.g. LACAPRA 2001; SHORE 2014). The lack of reflection on emotions in historical work in general still sustains the depersonalised and hyperrational understanding of historical scholarship. It reproduces the pervasive (but incorrect) dualism of the Western way of thinking, which separates rationality from emotions, the social from the individual, culture from nature, mind from body, and so on (e.g. CALHOUN 2001, p. 48-53).

In this article, I focus on the emotional dimensions of academic historical work within the early twentieth-century



Finnish community of historians. My starting point is the inextricable intertwining of reason and emotion - a premise that is today generally accepted across disciplines (see, e.g., JOHNSON 2007; WHITE 2009a; FELDMAN BARRET 2017). As the cognitive and the affective are interdependent in the production of knowledge, the formation of judgements and the making of meaning, emotions obviously lie at the core of both the scholarly practices and the personae of historians. Emotions not only make history personal, they also make it meaningful in the first place. As the sociologist James M. JASPER (2018, p. 166) suggests, objects, actions, persons, artefacts and phenomena 'mean' something to us because of how they make us feel. Thus, I analyse the ways in which historians' emotional processes have been intertwined into their scholarly activities and practices and how their emotions have been shaped and changed in relation both to the scholarly community and to a broader historical context. I pay special attention to the role of emotions in the construction of scholarly masculine selfhood. The academic historical community has recruited most of its members from males of the educated middle class so that as late as the 1980s women represented just over 17 per cent of the total number of academic historians in Europe (O'DOWN 2012, p. 353). Therefore, it is essential to approach modern historical scholarship as an affective gendered practice (see also BODDICE 2018, p. 95).

As my empirical source material, I use letters that a Finnish PhD student of history wrote between May 1909 and September 1918 to his senior colleague, Gunnar Suolahti, who at that time was already an established historian and, from 1918 onwards, a professor of Finnish History. These letters are a part of *Gunnar Suolahti's Letter Collection* (File 37), which is kept in the Suolahti Family Archives in the National Archives of Finland, Helsinki. The letters contain sensitive information about the PhD student's mental problems, so I here use only the initials of his first and family names, A.T., in order to protect his privacy and personal integrity. As it is the case with most archived letters (see STANLEY 2004, p. 202, 210–211), those



that I study in this article represent only one side of a reciprocal process of correspondence. In other words, a crucial feature of these letters is their turn-taking and reciprocity – they are a communication and an exchange between two persons, not a monologue. However, what is extant after about a hundred years is only one side's perspective on this interrelationship, which originally shaped both parties.

Nevertheless, these one-sided components of the correspondence still allow us to study the relational construction of selfhood and the emotional processes involved in the making of historiography that had an influence on both the personal and the collective. In this respect, it is also worth emphasising that in my previous studies I have explored the writings, published and unpublished, of dozens of academic historians both in Finland and abroad (see, e.g., JALAVA 2014; 2017; 2019), and thus my interpretations and generalisations are informed by significantly more general reading and relevant knowledge than just a collection of A.T.'s extant letters. For scholarly purposes, however, what makes A.T.'s letters so rewarding an object of study is the fact that he was a relatively recent arrival in academia. Therefore, he articulated certain tacit rules and practices of feeling more outspokenly than his senior colleagues, for whom the depersonalised and highly controlled emotional style cherished by professional male historians had already become an habitual emotional disposition (see also BLOCH 2002, p. 120-122; BURKITT 2002, p. 163-164).

In the following, I first discuss briefly the theoretical and methodological underpinnings of my approach, focusing on the concepts of emotion, feeling and the relational self. I base my interpretation on the philosophical insights of Maurice MERLEAU-PONTY (1996 [1945]), drawing on readings of the philosopher Mark JOHNSON (2007) and the sociologist James M. JASPER (2018) and exploiting the concept of the relational self of the historians Mary FULBROOK and Ulinka RUBLACK (2010). Generally, when referring to theory in this article, I use it in a heuristic sense in order to expand the conceptual



framework of what can become an object of analysis in the history of historiography (cf. RECKWITZ 2012, p. 243). I present my analysis in two sections, beginning with the intertwining of emotions in the scholarly community of early twentiethcentury Finnish historians with a broader historical context and continuing by examining emotional processes that were characteristic of historical scholarship. Finally, I close with a summary of my main findings.

Shaping Emotions and the Self in Letters

Until recently, academic discussion on emotions has, broadly speaking, revolved around two poles: universalism/ biological reductionism and social constructivism. The former has assumed that emotions have a uniform and non-cultural core in the biological body. By contrast, the latter has argued that people from different cultures and historical periods have radically different emotions because the human self and its relation to society are constructed by cultural discourses, which are not given and are, therefore, endlessly malleable (REDDY 2001, p. 94-111; PLAMPER 2015, p. 98-102). Consequently, historical research has been stuck between the supposedly authentic, inner 'true feelings' and the culturally constructed outer representations that it is assumed are never able to capture the ineffable, felt emotional experience. In psychohistory, which preceded the current history of emotions, the emphasis was on an allegedly universal psyche with its ahistorical drives and internal dynamics. Most contemporary historians of emotions, on the other hand, have been keen to insist that we can only study the outer displays and representations that humans have given to their emotions in the past. However, this implies a version of social constructionism that threatens to lose touch with the bodily dimension of emotions (PLAMPER 2015, p. 49-59; BODDICE 2018, p. 29-32; JASPER 2018, p. 11).

To open up a new horizon in the history of emotions, it is essential to break down the emotion/reason dualism, along with its attendant representationalist theory of mind, which



presupposes an ontological and epistemological gap between body and mind as well as between percepts and concepts (JOHNSON 2007, p. 87). Leaning on the insights of Maurice Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology, I thus take as my starting point a body-based intersubjectivity that is constitutive of our being-in-the-world. According to MERLEAU-PONTY (1996 [1945], p. 347-348, 360-362), human subjectivity is always embodied and inhabits a particular location. This means that all our thoughts, feelings and actions take place in and through our bodies, which, in turn, constantly engage with other mindful bodies as well as with our physical and social contexts and environments (see also BURKITT 2002, p. 152–153; JOHNSON 2007, p. 51; JASPER 2018, p. 21–24). From this perspective, it is possible to recognise the many forms of 'feeling-thinking' on the continuum linking them, from the most abstract ideas to the most gut-level reactions, as well as a variety of nonconscious processes, such as biochemical changes, which all reflect a constant flow of signals flowing through our bodies (JASPER 2018, p. 19–21).

As JASPER (2018, p. 3–5) points out, in addition to the emotion/reason dualism, a problem in the study of emotions is the homogenisation of the general term 'emotion.' To begin with, it is useful to distinguish the term 'affect' from 'emotion' and 'feeling.' The former can be understood in a broader sense as something that affects or is affected, whereas emotions and feelings are a sub-category of affects, referring to those feeling-thinking processes of which we are or can become conscious (FOX & ALLDRED 2017, p. 119–120). In standard English usage, 'feeling' is closer to the bodily symptoms and 'emotion' closer to the verbal label, but in practice, these distinctions are often blurred (JASPER 2018, p. 25–26). For the purposes of empirical analysis, JASPER (2018, p. 4–5) has developed a simple typology of five types of feelings and emotions. It includes reflex emotions (quick responses to our immediate environment, such as anger, surprise and shock); urges (strong bodily impulses, such as lust, hunger and substance addiction); moods (energising



or de-energising feelings that lack a direct object); affective commitments (relatively long-time attachments or aversions to other people, ideas, objects and places); and, finally, moral emotions (approval and disapproval of our own and others' actions).

Just as feelings and emotions cannot be explained only in terms of discourse, neither can they be reduced to the biological body. Although the categories, concepts and words that we use to label our emotions and feelings are just a part of feeling-thinking processes, they are, to cite JASPER (2018, p. 20–21, 28), 'singularly important because they don't just help us make sense of our perceptions and experiences: they help to create them'. In other words, our interpretations and categorisations are an essential part of how emotions happen (see also FELDMAN BARRETT 2017, p. 86, 104). This conception is parallel to the historian William REDDY's (2001, p. 96–111) well-known and widely used idea of 'emotives'. It suggests that the words denoting emotions and other expressions of them have an impact on what they are supposed to refer to so that they actually make emotions available to be experienced and are inherent part of an experience, not something that we use afterwards to explain what we have experienced.

The hypothesis of the embodied mind offers a methodological way to read textual sources for traces of observable, socially situated, embodied affective processes. It shows how emotions and thoughts are entangled so that changes in concepts and emotion words simultaneously arise from and affect the material reality through bodily practices. In other words, the categories, concepts and emotion words emerge from and together with the material world and the social relations around us so that ideas and cultural understandings do not precede, but are rather helped into becoming and enabled by the world (BOIVIN 2008, p. 46–47). Thus, it can be argued that the interpretations that past historians have given to their emotions in their correspondence allow us not only to study the modification of the rules, norms, expectations, words and



concepts of cultural feeling that shaped their experiences, but also to record actual ways of, and changes in, feeling (see also SCHEER 2012, p. 212–214, 220).

That is not to say that A.T.'s letters to his senior colleague were transparent windows into his emotional experiences. It is important to acknowledge that the letter writer's written emotions have been partly defined by social expectations, power relations and the conventions of letter writing. Since A.T. often expresses his emotions days or weeks after the actual experience, his letters are, to some extent, strategic pieces that were crafted for a particular addressee for certain purposes (see also ROPER 2010, p. 294). Similar to any other form of historical inquiry into human actions, a study of the available source material always mediates the mindful human bodies of the past. As long as sources exist, however, first-person and third-person accounts of affective practices, interpreted using the due source criticism and historical contextualisation, can arguably be taken as valid documents of past emotions and feelings (SCHEER 2012, p. 217-218).

As the constant flow of our feeling-thinking processes is comprised of varying compositions of conceptions, memories, chemistry, muscle twitches, perceptions, and so on, we can also understand the 'self' as a processual, sequential construct that, like other feeling-thinking processes, is made from these same elements (JASPER 2018, p. 24). In this respect, a useful theoretical tool is the concept of the 'relational self,' introduced by the historians Mary FULBROOK and Ulinka RUBLACK (2010, p. 267-271; see also BURKITT 2002). Instead of presuming that there has to be a 'doer behind the deed', they turn the focus on the ways in which agency is itself historically constructed, coloured and modified as a part of body-based intersubjectivity. From this perspective, private letters and other 'ego documents' can be studied for the light they shed on persons whose selfhood and identities are shaped in relation to the changing networks of interpersonal relations, with the letter writer's 'self' at the intersection of different sets of



often ambivalent identifications, expectations and flows. In other words, subjectivity can be theorised as emerging from connections and being relationally grounded, not as a consistent ego whose supposedly 'authentic' inner experiences are more or less masked in the cultural representations.

Thus, I approach the letters of the Finnish PhD student A.T. as one of the multiple loci in which the construction of his selfhood was emerging. In this respect, the concept of the relational self comes theoretically close to the philosopher Judith BUTLER's (1999) idea of performativity, in which a person's identity is understood as a signifying practice based on repetition and the possibility of a variation of that repetition. Ultimately, this idea, too, utilises the insights of Merleau-Ponty. He called this kind of processual selfhood 'sedimentation' (sédimentation), a personal history built up through embodied habits and practices, in which a person's former actions generate preferences and durable dispositions for his or her future actions, thus contributing to a certain personal style of being-in-the-world (MERLEAU-PONTY 1996 [1945], p. 441-442, 453-456). In connection with A.T.'s letters, Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology also allows us to approach the formation of scholarly masculinities as a stylistic differentiation in the ways of being-in-the-world of male historians. The issue at stake is the corporeal style of acting and doing certain things, including emotions and feelings, which traces affective gendered practices in historiographical work back to body-based intersubjectivity.

Emotional Commitment to the Nationalist Band of Brothers

The correspondence between the PhD student A.T. (1887–1959) and the historian Gunnar Suolahti (1876–1933) started in the spring of 1909. At that time, A.T. was a 22-year-old, newly wed Master of Arts, who had just begun his doctoral studies in Finnish history at the Imperial Alexander University of Finland (from 1918 onwards, the University of Helsinki). Gunnar Suolahti, for his part, had defended his

PhD thesis in Finnish History in 1901, and in 1909, at the age of 33 years, he was considered one of the most gifted young historians of his generation. In May 1909, when A.T. sent his first extant letter to Suolahti, the latter was doing archival research at the Royal Library of Sweden in Stockholm. Based on this letter (A.T. to G.S., May 2, 1909), it is obvious that they already knew each other relatively well. Not only were they both specialists in the national history of Finland, but they also shared a common nationalist worldview and a sense of belonging to a larger group of like-minded younger male academics, whom A.T. described in his letter as 'the cream of the crop' (*parhaimmisto*).

In the sociology of group formation and symbolic politics, this kind of affective commitment to a group and its ideology has been regarded as providing a relatively enduring personal and collective orientation to the social and physical world (JASPER 2018, p. 102, 117). The intertwining of emotions vis-àvis the scholarly community with broader nationalist sentiment also constituted the basic framework of A.T.'s cognitions about the past, the present and the future. In the case of all-male groups, the term 'band of brothers' has been used to describe such an attachment to a group. The term was originally used to refer to soldiers, but it has also been applied to many political, scholarly and intellectual groups (see PARKER & HACKETT 2012). Indeed, A.T. himself explicitly depicted the common intellectual and scholarly activities of his and Suolahti's in-group using metaphors of combat (e.g. A.T. to G.S., 20 March 1910), reflecting his intense emotional investment in their common cause. It seems that Suolahti had actually been the first to introduce some of these bellicose metaphors in his lost letters to A.T., so the notions of 'struggle', 'fight' and 'combat' were obviously widely shared by this band of brothers of younger scholars.

In the case of this group, the common cause uniting them was the cultural and linguistic Finnicisation of Finland. Finland had been an integral part of the Kingdom of Sweden



for centuries prior to 1809, when it passed into Russian hands. Consequently, Swedish continued to be used as the dominant language in Finland for administrative, scholarly and literary purposes until the late nineteenth century, and it was still at the beginning of the twentieth century the mother tongue of the upper classes. By contrast, Finnish was the language of the common people, who comprised approximately 85 per cent of the population in 1900. Hence, linguistic nationalism had become in Finland closely interwoven with the 'social question,' that is, the issue of social inequality, which had been highlighted by popular mobilisation and the emerging workingclass movement. Although A.T. and Suolahti, like most Finnish academic historians, were fluent in both Finnish and Swedish, in the tense atmosphere of early twentieth-century Finland, they considered it their overriding nationalist duty to advance the scholarly use of Finnish in academia. As they both stood on the conservative side of the political spectrum, they tended to ethnicise social conflicts as the conflict between the Finnishspeaking Finns and the Swedish-speaking, Swedish-orientated elite, whom they considered to be non-nationals. Thus, in order to promote national integration on a higher level, they constantly stressed the importance of national Finnish culture and the national 'common good' above sectional interests (JALAVA 2017).

With regard to his identification with the shared interests of the Finnish-speaking majority, A.T. experienced and expressed a number of intense emotions in his letters to Suolahti. For instance, he described Suolahti, himself and their like-minded colleagues as 'soldiers on the side of the Finnish people,' whose mission, ever since their childhood, had been the noble cause of Finnishness (A.T. to G.S., 20 March 1910; for Suolahti's nationalist conceptions, see JALAVA 2014, p. 45–46, 52; JALAVA 2017). This sense of group affiliation included various strategies of boundary making, in which cognitive, emotional and moral strands were inseparably woven together (see also JASPER 2018, p. 105, 107). As A.T. put it,



So often have I spent time pondering what you [Suolahti] once said about the satisfaction that one gets from the idea of unity with the Finnish common people . . . Indeed, the Finnish peasant was to be the emblem of our work! . . . In this respect, you are an exception among so many of our compatriots (A.T. to G.S., May 2, 1909).

In creating an in-group (Fennoman scholars) vis-àvis an out-group (Swedish-speakers, cosmopolitan liberals and otherwise shallow and morally deficient academics) and positioning himself on the positive side of this paired opposition, he was simultaneously careful in his formulations to express emotions of admiration and respect for Suolahti and other senior male members of the Finnish-speaking intellectual circles in which he moved. As he was eleven years younger than Suolahti, he presented himself as a humble devotee of his senior colleague, a novice who had so much to learn from his 'dear older brother' Gunnar (see, e.g., A.T. to G.S., 15 March 1910 and 20 March 1910). The salutation of 'Dear brother' (hyvä veli) at the beginning of a personal letter was at the time an established convention, but nationalists also deliberately borrowed their rhetorical frames from the language of kinship. The use of family metaphors resonated emotionally with, and lent itself to, building the shared collective identity of the band of brothers (see also BEREZIN 2002, p. 42).

However, in the spirit of the Gospel of Matthew, A.T. ultimately seemed to follow the strategy that those who humble themselves shall be exalted. By criticising the upper classes for being prim, materialistic and dishonest, by praising the peasant sympathies that Suolahti and and his acquaintances nourished, A.T. positioned himself at the core of the tiny intellectual elite of Fennoman male scholars. In his eyes, only they cherished purely idealistic moral values and truly advanced the progress of Finland as a nation (A.T. to G.S., 4 August 1910 and 22 November 1911). Furthermore, he presented himself as a true connoisseur of Suolahti's oeuvre, an exceptional person



who, unlike the public at large, profoundly understood Suolahti's ideas and historiographical principles (A.T. to G.S., 20 December 1909).

National attachment and the 'we-ness' of this nationalist brotherhood strongly influenced A.T.'s choice of his PhD dissertation subject: the philosophical ideas of Adolf Iwar Arwidsson (1791–1858), who was an early-nineteenthcentury pioneer of the Finnish nationalist movement. Since the professionalisation and institutionalisation of history as a modern academic discipline took place in an intimate relationship with nationalisation, nation building obviously had a profound impact on historians' choice of themes, basic concepts, explanatory theories and the construction of grand narratives. Developing the idea that a geographical and supposedly natural area with its people made up the nation and its history, they held that any type of history other than national history, whether it focused on one's own or some other national unit, was almost a logical impossibility (see, e.g., SIMENSEN 2000, p. 90; BERGER 2015). Another common historiographical trend all over Europe at that time was a focus on the 'great men' of the nation – and, in the case of a young nation like Finland, the invention of such national heroes of the past. Many historians considered a biographical approach to be particularly suitable for nationalist educational purposes. It offered a way to study one person's ideas and values as a manifestation of the imagined collective identity of the people, and it simultaneously enabled the people to identify with this 'great man' on both the cognitive and the emotional levels (VERGA 2012, p. 91-92; JALAVA 2019, p. 177-178).

However, the status of A.T.'s object of study, A.I. Arwidsson, at the beginning of the twentieth century in Finland was ambivalent: on the one hand, he was considered to be a national 'great man', but on the other he was also a contested emotional symbol attached to A.T.'s in-group of Fennoman scholars. By the last decades of the nineteenth century, the Finnish nationalist movement had firmly established itself, but



it had simultaneously also split into rival fractions. In academia, Gunnar Suolahti was a key figure in this rivalry, standing for the fraction of the 'Old Finns,' who despite being culturally conservative and demanding Finnish monolingualism, in order to advance national unity actually supported more radical social reforms than the liberal-minded 'Young Finns'. In 1905, Suolahti had successfully campaigned for the post of curator of the Tavastia Nation (Hämäläis-Osakunta, a Fennoman regional corporation of students at the university), in which he had considerable influence over students' opinions. According to A.T.'s letters, A.T. and Suolahti had initially become acquainted with each other in this student corporation, which A.T. had entered as a first-year undergraduate (A.T. to G.S., 15 March 1910). In this politically tense situation, there was an urge to reflect the history of the Finnish nationalist movement and interpret its 'great men' in such a way that their legacy matched with the convictions of one's own in-group. As Suolahti's younger brother Eino, an ardent nationalist, voiced his assessment of the situation, 'a proper Fennoman [Finnish ethno-linguistic nationalist] group is required in Helsinki in order to land a punch on people's noses every now and then' (Eino Suolahti to G.S., 12 March 1908).

To sum up, the interweaving of nation building and nationalism into scholarly choices and valuations highlights the importance of the nation-state as an emotionalised political community, which, in its turn, created an emotional attachment to the in-group of young nationalist-minded historians within the History Department of the university. This contributed to a certain personal and collectively shared style of beingin-the-world so that A.T.'s band of brothers did not simply display characteristic emotions but had characteristic ways of relating these emotions to each other and of relating them to cognition and perception. From this perspective, an emotional style can be seen as a result of the individual's involvement in embodied social relationships, not as something interior to the individual (CALHOUN 2001, p. 53). In A.T.'s case, it produced shared emotions of belonging, loyalty and trust, and, in turn,



also defined what others had a right to expect of him (see also BEREZIN 2002, p. 48). These emotions and expectations constituted a huge motivational power for A.T., a source of pride that gave meaning to his historical work as well as to his life in a more general sense (e.g. A.T. to G.S., 2 May 1909), but they could also arouse feelings of anxiety, shame and disappointment. As we shall soon see, this is what happened to A.T. after his PhD project turned out to be both a professional and a personal fiasco.

Emotional Processes in Historical Scholarship

In addition to nationalist musing and masculine in-group formation, a recurrent topic in A.T.'s letters to Suolahti was naturally his on-going PhD project. Since A.T.'s official PhD supervisor, Professor J. R. Danielson-Kalmari, was constantly overburdened with his own scholarly and political activities, in practice A.T. had adopted Suolahti as his unofficial supervisor and mentor, on whom he relied for advice on both on his scholarly and existential problems (e.g. A.T. to G.S., 2 May 1909 and 17 November 1909).

In his letters, A.T. expressed a crucial issue relating to historians' emotions that many historians have recognised but rarely analysed at any length in the methodological textbooks of historical research (see, e.g., MYHRE 2009, p. 132; SHORE 2014, p. 204-206; BODDICE 2018, p. 124-131): namely, A.T.'s letters raised the question of the historian's personal relationship with his or her research topic, in which there may appear strong emotions of liking or disliking, as well as moral approval or disapproval of, an historical actor, whom the historian, in a sense, comes to know by reading diaries, private correspondence and other relevant sources. At the same time, these letters cast light on the emotional motives that lead historians to choose a certain topic in the first place. While A.T. articulated these issues exceptionally frankly because he was a recent arrival in academia and, therefore, still in the process of learning the appropriate feeling rules of the



historical community (cf. BLOCH 2002, p. 120–122), the same emotional processes also concern more senior and established historians. To cite the historian Jan Eivind MYHRE (2009, p. 132): 'When historians get close to their protagonists, emotions inevitably appear.'

As is often the case during the research process, A.T. expressed mixed emotions about his PhD subject in his letters. On the one hand, he described the appeal of historical work, the pleasures and thrills that he experienced while reading the archival records and finding new information about the topic. He was also excited by German Idealism and Romanticism, above all the writings of J.G. Fichte and F.W.S. Schelling, who had had a major influence on the Finnish nationalist A.I. Arwidsson's thinking. In fact, it seems that something in these German philosophers resonated with him to the extent that it partly explained his investment in studying the past at all (on a general level, see ROBINSON 2010, p. 510). Through them, he felt that he was coming close to 'the truth about life' in general (A.T. to G.S., 18 May 1909).

On the other hand, his PhD subject seriously troubled him. For instance, he compared the protagonist of his PhD thesis, A.I. Arwidsson, with a more famous ideological father figure of the nationalist movement in Finland, J.V. Snellman. The result was that he found Arwidsson to be an 'intellectual lightweight'. Concomitantly, he developed an antipathy for Arwidsson: 'There are certain unsympathetic features in Arwidsson's character . . . I am repulsed by his Romantic conceitedness,' he complained to Suolahti (A.T. to G.S., 2 May 1909).

Although it is not my intention to argue for psychohistory as such, I find the psychodynamic concept of transference useful for understanding this matter. The historian's relationship to his or her research subjects resembles a transference relationship in the sense that the historian transposes his or her emotions, mental images, attitudes, and thoughts onto historical figures, events, and phenomena. This transference is arguably unavoidable, for the historian has to understand



why the historical actors experienced the world and acted in a certain way, and these interpretations are partly based on his or her own being-in-the-world. Neuroscientific research has explained such a transference by neural 'mirrors' in the brain that make empathy possible, but it also posits that the reading of others' emotions is nevertheless mediated through the self (BODDICE 2018, p. 125). To some extent, the historian can thus use his or her emotions as heuristic tools in the research process in order to understand the emotional experiences of the other. The transference, however, may also transform the research subject into the historian's selfobject, that is, into his or her 'textual self-extension', more or less shaped by his or her own personality (IHANUS 2012, p. 141–144, 170–173). In other words, while it is both possible and necessary to reconstruct the past emotional world in historical research, there is no reason to assume that our emotional responses are similar to those of historical actors (BODDICE 2018, p. 126-127).

When we take into account the empiricist undercurrent of modern historiography, together with its stark opposition of reason and emotion, it is no surprise that A.T.'s doctoral training did not include the ability to critically reflect on his own emotional responses to historical actors and sources. While A.T. was shaping his identity and selfhood in relation to his network of interpersonal relations, he simultaneously looked at himself through the mirror formed by his research subject and the main protagonist of his PhD thesis, A.I. Arwidsson. The self-image that he saw in this mirror did not entirely please him. Indeed, the looming mediocrity of his principal choice of subject, the ridiculously self-centred and bombastic Arwidsson, implied by association that perhaps he, too, was not a heavyweight in historical scholarship himself. In the hierarchy of academic historiography, certain topics were (and still are) ranked higher than others. For instance, in the German-dominated History Departments of fin-de-siècle Europe, political history with its study of military leaders, diplomatic sources and international relations was commonly considered a more



essential and manly subject than the history of art and literature (CHICKERING 1993, p. 87–89). By choosing the 'wrong' topic, a young PhD student could effectively marginalise him- or herself even before a single sentence of the doctoral thesis was written. As A.T. was a male PhD student, he also faced the danger of emasculating himself with an 'inappropriate' choice of a 'soft' subject. Hence, while wrestling with his PhD project, A.T. expressed serious doubts about his ability to 'ever proceed to the fruition state (*siirtyä hedelmöimis-stadiumiin*) [...] and to become a virile breadwinner of the family' (A.T. to G.S., 15 March 1910). In compensation, however, he considered Fichte, Schelling and other German 'intellectual giants' to be more rewarding masculine self-objects. 'These great system builders are extraordinary men of force . . . I am strongly attracted to Neo-Idealism,' he wrote to Suolahti (A.T. to G.S., 18 May 1909; see also 2 May 1909).

The irony of A.T.'s PhD project is that these German intellectual giants eventually came to be his downfall. During the academic year of 1909–10, he participated in Professor Karl Lamprecht's famous Seminar, held in the Institut für Kulturund Universalgeschichte at the University of Leipzig, in order to broaden his methodological skills and deepen his knowledge of German Idealism. This seminar had been suggested to him by Suolahti, who himself was Lamprecht's former PhD student and was inspired by Lamprechtian Kulturgeschichte (A.T. to G.S., 23 October 1909 and 17 November 1909; JALAVA 2014). In Leipzig, away from Finland, to which he held strong affective loyalties, and also away from his wife, who clearly served him as a source of ontological security, A.T. suffered from homesickness and an increasingly negative mood that exacerbated his pessimism. 'As soon as I arrived here [Leipzig], my nerves went on the warpath: there have been a couple of very hard days,' he wrote to Suolahti (A.T. to G.S., 17 November 1909). Simultaneously, his immersion in German philosophy grew out of all proportion, and soon he experienced a mental collapse. The diagnosis was an 'advanced neurasthenia,' a diagnosis that had become popular in the latter part of the



nineteenth century to explain such symptoms as weakness, distress, insomnia and depression, particularly in the case of male professionals who had lost their ability to work but did not exhibit any apparent somatic defects. In German academia, the best-known neurasthenia patient of the time was probably the sociologist Max Weber, who had received his diagnosis in 1898 after a nervous breakdown (A.T. to G.S., 15 March 1910; for neurasthenia as a 'fashionable' fin-de-siècle diagnosis, see e.g. JOHANNISSON 1994, p. 141–144; PIETIKÄINEN 2013, p. 129–136).

As A.T. was unable to continue his PhD project in Leipzig because of his advanced neurasthenia, he decided to return to Finland in the spring of 1910. His failure to pursue what senior historians had recognised as a promising academic career created in him a sense of shame about who he was. 'My inner loss is colossal; as far as my PhD work is concerned, I have actually wasted my entire study trip, and I feel deep moral degradation,' he agonised. Simultaneously, he felt ashamed of this anxiety, for he assumed that Suolahti and other senior historians had certainly gone through even greater setbacks than the one that he was facing. Although he confessed to Suolahti that he was sceptical about the future of his PhD project, the strong affective loyalties associated with Finland and the nationalist band of brothers still gave him hope in his desperate situation: 'As a legacy of the good old student corporation days, I don't have gloomy thoughts about patriotic work back home,' he consoled himself (A.T. to G.S., 15 March 1910).

Once again, Suolahti helped his junior colleague by arranging a post for him on the editorial staff of the periodical *Aika* ('Time'), which he had founded in 1908 to promote Fennoman cultural endeavours. Fairly soon, however, A.T. found himself in a new stressful situation. A crucial issue was that his fellow editors did not unanimously endorse his admiration for Finnish peasant culture as being the core element in nationalist cultural politics (A.T. to G.S., 4 August 1910). In the course of



the next few years, he therefore started to distance himself from the intellectual circle of *Aika*. Simultaneously, he also gave up the hope of ever continuing his PhD project. As his emotional commitment to the band of brothers of younger Fennoman scholars waned, his moral commitment to the nationalist cause evaporated, too. Instead, Christianity now started to occupy his thoughts, and he criticised his former nationalist friends for being materialistic and dishonest 'fakes' (A.T. to G.S., 22 November 1911).

To end his academic via dolorosa, A.T. finally accepted a permanent teaching post at the Finnish-speaking secondary school in the small town of Porvoo on the south coast of Finland. There he started to recover his energy and good mood by leading the local temperance movement and publishing popular books on religious issues (A.T. to G.S., 22 November 1911 and 26 August 1914). To some extent, A.T.'s withdrawal from historical research and the scholarly community for religious reasons can be considered an attempt to save his face before an apparent professional and personal failure. At the same time, however, it manifests the emotional investment that commonly accompanies academic work, as well as the way in which scholars invest themselves in, and achieve their subjectivity and identity through, body-based intersubjectivity and an affective attachment to the scholarly community, research work and institutions (see also CALHOUN 2001, p. 53–54; JASPER 2018). When A.T.'s attachment to the community of Fennoman historians turned into aversion, he also lost his personal interest in history. As a kind of epilogue, it can be mentioned that one of the first female PhD students of history in Finland, Liisa Castrén, who had started her doctoral studies under the guidance of Suolahti in the late 1920s, finally defended a long-awaited PhD thesis on A.I. Arwidsson in 1944 (KAARNINEN 2005, p. 306).

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Conclusion

I started my article with the claim that the emotional investment that accompanies historians' labour is an underresearched, if not even a deliberately dismissed topic. Despite the fact that the interest in emotions has recently grown in historical research, historians have usually been content to study other people's emotions, but not those connected with their own craft. Since there is no cognition without emotion, however, we have to take emotions into account in order to understand the production of knowledge, the formation of judgements and the making of meaning in historical scholarship, for otherwise we do not know what ultimately makes historians tick.

In the particular case that I have discussed in this article, the early twentieth-century Finnish community of academic historians, the nation state was an emotionalised political community, which, in its turn, created an emotional attachment to the in-group of young nationalist-minded historians within the History Department of the Imperial Alexander University. From this perspective, for instance, the currently much criticised orientation of methodological nationalism - that is, historians' tendency to treat national societies or nation-states with their contemporary borders as 'natural' units of analysis - is not just a cognitive 'error' that can be solved by revising the practices of research and archival investigation, but rather has to be considered a part of the everyday status quo in which historians have had, and arguably still have, a huge emotional investment. The interweaving of nation-building and nationalism into the formation, choices and evaluations of the scholarly community gave rise not only to strong emotions of belonging, loyalty and trust but also to high expectations, anxiety and the fear of losing face. The political struggle between and within different fractions of Finnish society motivated historians to address certain topics in their research, but, simultaneously, a particular research subject could also turn into the historian's self-object, which was partly shaped by the his or her personality. In this



respect, the importance of the gender dimension is worth emphasising, for particularly the male historian's masculine identity and manly self-esteem were intermingled with the choice of a 'hard enough' research topic and the concomitant respect from his male colleagues.

Broadly speaking, in my analysis, I found four main types of feeling-thinking processes that can be generalised with regard to historical work in general. First, the historical community is not a self-regulating coterie with its own standards, values, and struggles. Rather, the boundaries between the historical community and society at large are porous and overlapping, and factors such as geopolitical conditions, the leeway allowed by particular domestic policies and the consequent differences in local emotional cultures affect the making of historiography. Moreover, historians are often torn between contradictory affective loyalties to the different communities to which they simultaneously belong, such as the scholarly community, a political party, a national community or a church (see also JALAVA 2017). This also holds for the interrelationship between historians and their readership, but since the main protagonist of my article, the Ph.D. student A.T., did not manage to complete his thesis, my source material unfortunately did not allow me to study the reception of his work.

That said, second, the historical community *is* a coterie of its own in the sense that anyone who wishes to make an academic career in history needs friendly colleagues and supporters in order to build a scholarly network and obtain scholarships, posts, and other relevant positions of trust that qualify him or her academically. To apply the sociologist Jack BARBALET's (2002, p. 134) analysis of science to historical scholarship, before it is anything else, historical research is a form of activity, and in particular the actions of, and interactions between, historians. As was the case with the PhD student A.T., whose letters I have used as source material in this article, membership of an ingroup of historians is of decisive importance in the sense that it produces shared emotions that constitute a huge motivational



impetus in historical work. The emotional attachment to the scholarly community includes such energising feelings as a sense of self-confidence and security, although it also arouses feelings of anxiety, shame and disappointment if one cannot meet the community's expectations and standards. As the early twentieth-century community of academic historians was, in practice, an all-male association, the danger of emasculating oneself constantly lurked in the background.

Third, emotions affect historians' professional research activities, for example in their choice of subject, basic concepts and explanatory theories, as well as in their interpretation of sources and the construction of narratives. Referring to both the psychoanalytic concept of transference and the neuroscientific idea of neural 'mirrors', I argued that the historian's understanding of why the historical actors experienced the world and acted in a certain way is partly based on his or her own being-in-the-world. While this personalised relationship to historical actors is unavoidable, the partial transformation of A.T.'s research subject into his self-object and textual selfextension serves as a warning that historians should not assume that their emotional responses are similar to those of historical actors.

Fourth, emotions turned out to be of great importance in the historical research process as such. These emotions include the pleasures, thrills and excitement that the historian experiences while reading archival records and finding new information about his or her subject. Simultaneously, this category of emotions also includes more mundane or negative emotions, such as boredom amidst piles of paper, anxiety caused by the apparent immensity of the relevant research material, and frustration at the slow progress of the research process. On a more general level, emotions also partly explain historians' investment in studying the past at all. Ultimately, since the issue at stake is the meaning of their own lives, an historical phenomenon 'means' something to them because of how it makes them feel.

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That is not to say that the enduring empiricist and objectivist epistemological undercurrent of modern academic historiography should be replaced by the celebration of a 'progressively affective' historiography (cf. FITZPATRICK 2010, p. 186–188; GAMMERL 2012, p. 169–170). Even less do I suggest that historians should give up their striving for impartiality and the idea that historiography involves truth claims based on evidence. The question is not whether emotions and history as an academic discipline are compatible. Rather, as emotions are always entangled in the making of historiography, a part of the historian's craft should be to critically reflect on how emotions affect the production of historical knowledge and the reception of his or her narratives.

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